

Wine to Sake

Eduardo Dingler, Wine to Sake: Lang & Reed, champions of Cabernet Franc

- EDUARDO DINGLER
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It is no secret that Lang & Reed is the standard bearer of California Cabernet Franc, responsible for converting many of us and inspiring young winemakers to dive into this variety.

The Lang & Reed Wine Company, captained by wine legend John Skupny along with his lovely bride Tracey and their family, have brought Cabernet Franc to our table for nearly three decades.

This love story begins in Kansas City where Tracey and John met many moons ago while attending university. The two dove into the world of wine as they got to know each other. After school, destiny reunited them in Europe.

“After spending time in Quito, Ecuador, I reached out to Tracy who was traveling through Europe and told her I wanted to meet her there,” John recalls with a big smile on his face. “A few telegrams later we arranged to meet in Luxembourg and without hesitation I proposed to her. I just knew this was real.”

The two embarked on a journey that led them to Bordeaux and the Loire. It was at this time and place that their passion for Cabernet Franc started. Back in the United States, they knew they wanted to move to California. Their dream came true and they ended up in San Francisco for a few years before relocating to the Napa Valley, a place they’ve called home for over 40 years.

The name John Skupny carries a lot of weight in the wine industry. For decades, he has been an important part of the fabric of a number of iconic California brands. Not many people have the impressive resume that John has accumulated over the years, giving him street cred and unparalleled experience in this industry.



Lang & Reed Wine Company was founded in 1993 with the help of friends, mentors and industry giants like Tony Soter, John Kongsgaard and Dan Duckhorn amongst many others. Since then, John and Tracey's visions of elevating the Cabernet Franc world has been embraced by the legions of fans made every day.

I am a big fan of their Cabernet Franc proposition; the line-up includes two juxtaposed expressions.

— **The 2016 Lang & Reed Cabernet Franc, North Coast** (\$27). A playful wine with vibrancy and colorful attributes that jump out of the glass full of inviting notes of steeped hibiscus tea leaves, farmers market fresh strawberries and plenty of holiday spice, making it an excellent introduction to the complexity and pizzazz of Cab Franc. The fruit sources for this bottling are a combination of High Valley and Red Hills from Lake County, Sonoma and a sprinkle of Napa Valley.

Its more serious sibling is the **2016 Lang & Reed 'Two-Fourteen' Cabernet Franc, Napa Valley** (\$85). This layered masterpiece is entitled to a seat at the big boys' table. Characterized by depth and muscular attributes full of violets, summer blackberries and black currant with an orchestra of layers in the palate that resolves in silky tannins. Made exclusively from the two-fourteen clone rarely encountered outside of its native Loire Valley. The vineyard source is Sugar Loaf in the South portion of the Napa Valley.

In addition to the Cabernet Franc line-up, there are two Chenin Blanc expressions that manage to capture the essence of this sassy varietal.

The 2018 Lang & Reed Chenin Blanc, Mendocino (\$27) is a tasting room exclusive. An electric and zippy wine with a white floral component with notes of white nectarine and chalky minerality.

And its counterpart the **2018 Lang & Reed Chenin Blanc, Napa Valley** (\$35) a mouthwatering expression showcasing a festival of white carnations, honeysuckle and a hint of Sicilian lemon zest with a salty layer that makes it irresistible.

I recently had the honor and opportunity to sit down with John at their newly unveiled tasting room in Saint Helena. The quaint and welcoming spot is located off of Main Street across from Goose & Gander. An experience that I highly recommend, the place, the hosts and, of course, the wine make it all an unforgettable experience.

The tasting room hospitality (\$30) includes four wines and pairing selections that include dried peaches, bresaola and the famous Panevino bread sticks was hosted by Tracey, John and Megan Skupny.

I can't wait to go back. Thank you, John, for taking the time, and congratulations on all the success.

Watch now: Tasting Cabernet Franc at Lang & Reed

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